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The church is
built upon the foundation
of the apostles . . .

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The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today . . .

THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

We believe in the one holy. catholic and apostolic church.

Our study of the church has been based thus far upon that trenchant statement from the Apostles' Creed (4th century) that not only affirms the church's essential oneness, but also its holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. We have chosen this route because it leads us to the very substance of the Body of Christ, and not merely its forms. When people come to appreciate the church as holy, catholic, and apostolic, the proper forms should follow in due course; but if forms and structures are made paramount, the church is not likely ever to be truly holy, catholic, and apostolic.

The tragic truth is that a community of believers can make such a point of being scriptural "in name, doctrine, and practice" as to be a sect instead of holy, racial and parochial instead of catholic, and traditional instead of apostolic. Thus far we have called for a church that has that holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord" and that universality that embraces all that are in Christ Jesus. In this essay we intend to show that the ancients were right in recognizing apostolicity as an essential ingredient of God's community upon earth.

By apostolicity we are not referring to the Episcopal view of apostolic succession, which argues that the true church must find its traces all the way back to the apostles, the first bishops, who laid their hands upon their successors, and they upon theirs, to an unending succession to our own time. This is a current problem in ecumenical discussions, for those who believe in the Episcopal succession of ministry do not recognize those outside that succession as true ministers.

Some Baptist groups have a similar notion, though it takes the form of ecclesiastical succession, which is that their church can be traced in an unending line all the way back to John the Baptist and the apostles. It may be a labyrinthine journey, making its way through the Anabaptists and Waldenses, and all sorts of unBaptist-like folk, but one does finally arrive, however shaken.

Nor does apostolicity suggest any kind of "identity syndrome," which attempts to establish exact likeness to the church of the apostolic era, as if to suggest that such congregations as those at Jerusalem or Corinth are blueprints for the church of our time, when in fact it would be perilous to form ourselves after their likeness. It is folly to suppose that it would even be possible for the Church of Christ of today to be a carbon copy of the apostolic congregations, cultural barriers making it impossible if nothing else. Those of us who dare to presume such similitude to the primitive church would surely be

shocked (and perhaps be made most uncomfortable) if we were suddenly transposed to the first century and made a part of one of the New Testament churches. And it would be more than a cultural shock!

Apostolicity means that the church now as well as then must be grounded in the authority of the apostles. It means that the Church of Christ must be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. 2:20). It means that "God has appointed in the church first apostles" (1 Cor. 12:28), and that the church must always be rooted in what may be called the *apostolic experience*.

That experience began with twelve men being selected to be apostles. It was not unusual for rabbis and philosophers of the ancient world to gather an inner circle about them, but the nature of the apostolic mission was such as to make this the most unusual relationship in human history. Jesus was not simply one more teacher gathering a band of assistants. He was himself an apostle (Heb. 3:1), sent of God to be the Messiah who had come to redirect Israel and to change the course of history. Indeed, he had come to introduce the kingdom of God to lost humanity, to make whole, and to provide the abundant life. He bore the government of heaven upon his shoulders, as the prophets had said (Isa. 9:6).

The selection of the Twelve was the verdict of eternity itself. "I have manifested thy name to the men thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me," prayed the Messiah (John 17:6). Luke tells us that before he appointed the Twelve "he went out into the hills to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God" (Lk. 6:12). The Messiah was lost in the will of God. In those hills he was gathering the names of those that the Father had selected. He received their commission from the Architect of the plan of the ages. All night he communed with God about twelve men. He was alone. At daybreak he beckons to his disciples to come, perhaps a core of a score or more of inner-circle followers. He begins the greatest roll call ever uttered by human lips: *"Simon.* (I will call you *Peter*) … *Andrew … James … John … Philip … Bartholomew … Matthew Thomas … James Alphaeus … Simon Zealotes … Judas of James … Judas Iscariot.*

What a destiny! Mark alone gives us the purpose of the appointment: "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mk. 3:14-15). Already he had disciples to be with him, so these had a peculiar destiny in that "being with him" meant they would be schooled and disciplined as ambassadors of the new reign of God upon earth, his own special envoys of the new order. As he went on to say to them: "In the new world, when the Son of Man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28). And Rev. 21:14 enhances the destiny even more: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

It was a discipline of suffering. “I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 4:9-10). Though Paul was an apostle born out of season, he was not spared the commission of special suffering: “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:1 6). And according to tradition (and scripture in the case of James, who according to Acts 12:2 was beheaded by Herod) the apostles’ sealed their lives of hardship with tragic deaths. Paul was beheaded and Peter, Simon Zealotes, and Andrew were all crucified. Batholomew was flayed alive and then beheaded, while Thomas was stoned and then pierced with a lance. Others were apparently left to die in prison. However accurate tradition is, they were men with the sentence of death upon them.

But they were heaven’s ambassadors, *plenipotentiary* ambassadors, in that they spoke with full authority for the King. And it is in that authority that the church has its roots. Paul was referring to his apostolic authority when he wrote: “The mystery was made knuwn to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive *my* insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:3-6). The blending of Jews and Gentiles into the one humanity was the great mystery proclaimed and sealed by apostolic ministry.

To the apostle Peter the Lord announced: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt. 16:19). Jesus gave them two preaching commissions, the first was only to the Jews (Mt. 10:5), while the last was to all nations (Mt, 28:18-19). The so-called Great Commission was, therefore, an *apostolic* commission, designed to make the church universal. The church today is certainly to witness to its faith, but it is improper to apply an apostolic commission to all Christians. This commission was accompanied by special powers for its execution, not only the power to speak the languages of the nations to which they were sent, but “the signs of an apostle,” which according to 2 Cor. 12:12 included “signs, wonders and mighty works.”

To support them in their mission the Holy Spirit was breathed upon them, filling them and endowing them far beyond what would be the case with an ordinary believer. John 20:22-23 indicates that the measure of their power was determined by the Spirit’s endowment: “‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’ And when he said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained!’”

As the apostolic office was peculiar so the powers that accompanied it were peculiar. It is erroneous for any of us to assume either the apostles' commission or their powers in the Holy Spirit. That the Spirit is the resource of power for us all, and that he gives us diverse gifts, is to be granted; but this hardly means that there is no distinction between the powers given the apostles and that given to the rest of us. "The signs of an apostle" is a distinct reference, which must be also what Heb. 2:3-4 is referring to: "The great salvation was first declared by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will."

This means that only an apostle could say: "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification … God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God … Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:7-13).

The church, therefore, has God's revelation only through the apostles, for only they speak for God through the Spirit. The Spirit enlightens us in what has already been revealed, but he does not reveal anything beyond what he gave to the apostles. This is the basis of the apostolicity of the church. It accepts the injunction to "remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Pet. 3:2).

A church that presumes to receive further revelation is not apostolic in nature. Considering their own special insight as authentic as the apostolic wisdom, such ones cut themselves off from the roots of the Christian faith. And as a "cut-flower" religious culture they are doomed to the fate of their own self-delusion. Once severed from apostolicity, delusion begets delusion and there are myriads of voices echoing the Spirit, all contradicting each other. There are different ways to explain the fallacies of Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen G. White, Aimee Semple McPherson, and the like, but it is basically a matter of rejecting the apostolicity of the church.

This means that the church's faith is rooted in scripture, the universally recognized authority for God's people for 2,000 years. As the *Methodist Discipline* puts it: "The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." The Methodists are here recognizing the apostolicity of the church.

The Westminster divines in *The* Confession of Faith (1647) were even more explicit: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word."

The Church of Christ today in looking back upon the apostolic experience, which is expressed in scripture, finds its norms for being the Body of Christ. It is not necessarily to be like this or that church in the scriptures, but out of the apostles' experiences at Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, etc. emerges the will of God for us. We are not necessarily to do what the apostles did in those churches in all the particulars, for these differed from one church to the next; but we are to do for our age what they did for theirs: *glorify Jesus Christ before men!* The source for this is in their word and example as inspired by the Spirit.

This means that the living Pattern for the church today is Jesus, and it is He that we see in the testimony of the apostles and in their struggle to make their congregations into his likeness. This not only frees us from sectism, where men's traditions are made the basis of acceptance, but also from the Babel of confusion that finds some new voice of the Spirit or a different revelation behind every bush. The apostolic church is impelled by the apostles' love and liberated by their authority. —*the Editor*

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DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT COME ALONG AFTERWARDS?

The community of believers in our time should rejoice that a sort of "era of the Holy Spirit" is upon us. Not that the Spirit has not always been with God's church upon earth, but that there is an enthusiasm for his mission and ministry in the life of the saint as never before in recent history. Cassettes and tapes on topics about the Spirit are making their way around the world and across the country like courtiers on their busy flights. Books on the Spirit and his gifts are in great demand and it is the Spirit-concerned speakers that are being listened to. Though hardly predictable a decade ago, the Holy Spirit is *the issue* in the modern church, especially in our own nation. A historian of this era might well name his chapter on this phenomenon *The Discovery of the Holy Spirit*.

True, many in the Churches of Christ have not yet made the discovery. They are like those twelve Ephesians encountered by Paul who had not so much as heard that the Holy Spirit had been given. But there are thousands among us who have embarked upon a

completely new life in the Spirit, rejoicing in the celebration of Jesus and experiencing happiness they never dreamed possible. Many of these are “charismatic” in that they speak in tongues or have other such gifts. Scores of these I know personally, and in nearly every case there is a fulfillment of life that has given new meaning to discipleship in Jesus. In all this I rejoice and only hope that more and more of our people will be deeply touched by the Spirit’s presence in their lives.

But in all this there is one thing that disturbs me, and I find it permeating the entire Spirit movement. This is the view that the Spirit comes to the believer sometime after he has turned to Jesus in faith and obedience, perhaps many years afterwards. A close friend sometimes confides in me, “May *received* last night!” or perhaps, “John has been *seeking* for over a year now.” This *seeking* and *receiving* is in reference to the Holy Spirit, often described as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Some enthusiasts have special prayers that such seekers will receive then and there, which is expected to result in glossolalia. This is usually with the laying on of hands, perhaps by several people, and the seeking and the praying is sometimes traumatic, suggesting that God may be moved to give the Spirit if there is sufficient emotional appeal or perhaps surrender. If the seeker does not receive, it is presumed that the Spirit is not yet ready, and so the search continues.

Many of these, if not all of them, have long since believed in Jesus and been baptized into his Body. But their profession has had little meaning, and love, hope and joy have been unknown qualities. They meet someone, perhaps an old friend whose life is transformed, who has the joy and fulfillment that they have always wanted. The friend shares his discovery of the Holy Spirit, and so a new *seeker* is enrolled. Tongues is not always a part of this, but it often is, and nearly always “the baptism” is verified by the gift of tongues.

There is often moving drama in the stories, leaving the uniniated to suppose that he is missing something great and so should join the search. A husband may *receive* during the night, accompanied by a light in the room or some sort of subjective experience that defies description. It is as if he were floating on a cloud instead of a Simmons innerspring, and then and there, while his wife sleeps on unaware, he speaks in a new tongue and praises God with a joy before unimagined. His discovery is too precious to keep, not even until morning, so he arouses his wife to tell her the good news. They pray together until morning, with the wife mystified, if not envious, of her husband’s new prayer language. Not receiving herself that night, she comes in from a prayer circle, and while her husband sits up in bed to get some indication of her progress, she looks at him radiantly and silently, giving that nod of the head that is reminiscent of the return from the doctor’s office verifying the first pregnancy.

Even when the authenticity of such experiences is granted, some severe perils remain. One is elitism. Such ones can easily conceive of themselves as "in" as few believers ever are, and their temptation is either to insist that others follow in their experience or to assume an unintended superiority over others, or both. They easily become crusaders for glossolalia, and may even begin to pity those who remain uninitiated. They often leave their old haunts where they could best witness to a deeper spiritual life and join that elite group of super saints.

Another hazard is that of universalizing what is particular, or making catholic what is private and personal. Even if the Spirit blesses one in a spate of light and sound, followed by a crescendo of tongues, it does not follow that he will deal with other believers in the same way. The scriptures state clearly that "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit" (l Cor. 12:4), and the apostle makes an affirmation by way of a question, "Do all speak with tongues?" (l Cor. 12:30)

But, believe me, the temptation to universalize these spiritual experiences is not only real, but all too often yielded to. By implication many of these enthusiasts answer Paul's question with a *Yes,* all can or should speak in tongues. I can understand the weight of the temptation, for, after all, if you have had a scintillating "send" from the Lord, especially after years of depression, you not only want to share it but make it the experience of others as well.

And so it should be, if indeed it is a *catholic* feature of the faith. If the scriptures make it clear that a given experience is for all, in all times and in all circumstances, then, and only then, is it to be expected of others. Otherwise it should be revered as something special from the Lord and held as private property. It appears difficult for a "charismatic" to realize that the Spirit may be at work in others in ways that are just as real and precious, even if not as dramatic. Surely the Spirit acts in our lives according to our *needs,* and it is folly to suppose that our needs are identical.

With all this said, I must give further expression to my misgiving to the idea that the Holy Spirit comes along afterwards, and that even after being in Christ for years one may anticipate receiving *the baptism* as a kind of "second blessing." And this is presumed to be the normal experience for the revitalized believer, as if the scriptures taught this as a matter of course.

The truth is that such an idea stands highly vulnerable before an open Bible. No congregation is urged to seek a baptism in the Holy Spirit. No believer can be found *seeking* or *receiving* any kind of "second blessing." There is no evidence that any saints, once they had believed and obeyed the gospel, went on into this *afterwards* experience sometime later. No one is referred to as *seeking* and no one referred to as *receiving.* And the scriptures are silent about believers having to plea, plod, and placate in an agonizing search for the Spirit, more often failing than not.

The subject of our concern is referred to as "the *promised* Holy Spirit," and the scriptures make it clear in what context this promise is realized. Eph. 1:13 reads: "In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." This shows that the Ephesians received the Spirit, God's promise, when they became Christians. The rest of the letter reveals that the Spirit was the source of their enlightenment (1:18), the means of their access to the Father (2:18) and their growth in the Body (2:22). The Spirit was their source of strength as he dwelt within them (3:16) and the creator of their unity (4:3). In 4:30 the apostle speaks of the Spirit not only as dwelling with them and sealing them for the day of redemption, but as a Person so close to them that he can be grieved by their foul talk. For him to say "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed" indicates that the Spirit was a living reality in their lives, as much so as any other person. You don't *grieve* an idea, or a principle, or a power, or a book.

All this about the Spirit in that Ephesian church — and when did they receive the Spirit? When they believed and were baptized (Acts 19:1-7). As much as he says about the Spirit, there is nothing that approximates the notion that once they were saints they were to embark upon a quest for the Spirit. He does say to them in 5:18, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit," but this can hardly be a reference to some completely new experience, different from all else that is said about the Spirit in their lives. It has to refer to their appropriating or drinking deep of the blessing that God had given them. This is why we should always seek a closer walk with the indwelling Spirit, even to the place of being so controlled by his presence that it is as if we were Spirit -intoxicated.

It is in order, therefore, to seek and pray for a continual filling of the Holy Spirit of promise that God bequeathed to us when we accepted Jesus. If this is what is meant by "the baptism of the Holy Spirit," then I say *Praise God!* But I hear something else when people speak of *seeking* and *receiving*, as if the Spirit comes along after people accept Jesus, perhaps many years afterwards, and only then after a considerable ordeal.

The promised Spirit was also proclaimed on Pentecost. Acts 2:38 says: "Repent, and be baptized ever one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The next verse identifies "the promise" (of the Spirit) as being for Jews and Gentiles alike. Among our pioneers it was Walter Scott that used "the finger method" and spelled out to folk God's plan for them on five fingers — Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Remission of Sins, and the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, along the way we dropped the last promise and added Confession to the list, which Scott appropriately left out. I believe like Walter Scott, and before him like the apostle, that the Holy Spirit is a gift that God grants to those who are baptized into Jesus.

Rom. 8:9 makes it clear that if the Spirit is not in the believer he is not a true Christian: “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” How then can a longtime Christian *seek* what he must already have if he is a true believer? If one is not really a believer, if he were devoid of faith at the time of his baptism (Campbell sees this as the only reason for re-immersion), then it would make as much sense for him to seek the Spirit as the remission of sins —and all other blessings that attend obedience.

Otherwise we must grant that every believer has the Spirit. He may even suppose that the Spirit is in a Book, and seek to gain fulfillment by memorizing the Book. But still he has the Spirit, however grieved the Spirit may be over the person’s ignorance of his preserce. The Spirit is gracious, for the believer’s body remains his temple (l Cor. 6:19), even when, as with the Corinthians, the Spirit has reason to feel less than welcome. He is there within, or like the Christ, at the door, and the great resources of power are there for our asking. This is why Paul could instruct the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit. They were to be filled again and again, even to the point of intoxication, with what they already had!

If the promised Spirit is given to the believer at baptism rather than sometime afterwards, it is nonetheless true that the Spirit’s ministry to the believer is continual and will be as fulfilling as one will allow. The believer *lives* by the Spirit (Rom. 8:5), *walks* by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), and is *led* by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14). Moreover the believer is made to drink of that one Holy Spirit (l Cor. 12:13). All this yields a harvest in his life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are the fruit of the Spirit, which necessarily follow the Spirit-filled and Spirit-controlled life.

Then there are certain *gifts* of the Spirit, which are to be distinguished from the fruit. Every believer will have the fruit, if he allows the Spirit to minister through him, while the gifts are bestowed more sparingly. The gifts are listed in 1 Pet. 4:1 0, Rom. 12:6-8, and 1 Cor. 12:4-11. These are *charismata*, special gifts of the Spirit, and these passages indicate that each saint will have at least one of these gifts. Each saint will, of course, have *all* of the Spirit’s fruit.

This essay, therefore, has no quarrel with the idea that a gift like tongues or the discernment of spirits or of administration might come along afterwards. If the Spirit dwelling within my brother decides that he needs the gift of tongues and so bestows the gift, I will rejoice that the Guest within has so blessed my brother. But why call this “the baptism”? The phrase “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” is after all not in the Bible. Or why refer to this as receiving the Holy Spirit. The scriptures make it clear that the disciple has the Spirit from the beginning, irrespective of what the Spirit may do for him during a life-time.

And this notion that being Spirit-filled and speaking in tongues go together simply will not hold up in the light of scripture. Jesus was ultimately filled with the Spirit, but no tongue-speaking the best we can tell. The Ephesians were Spirit-filled, but nothing said about tongues. And it is noteworthy that even though *Romans* was written from Corinth where there were *some* who spoke in tongues and where it was something of an issue, the apostle writes at length about the Spirit and even lists the *charismata* (Spiritual gifts), but does not once refer to tongues in the entire epistle. And while the Corinthians were Spirit-filled all along (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19), only a minority had the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10).

In our life in the Spirit the apostle seems to be telling us that the gifts *(charismata)* are strictly secondary to the fruit, especially the crowning fruit of love. And love is a fruit, not a gift. "Earnestly desire the higher gifts," he says, which, by the way, do not include tongues, "but I will show you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31). Then he launches into his psalm of love.

In the light of all this it is folly to associate tongues with the receiving of the Holy Spirit. True, tongues and other such gifts have always been present, more or less, in the church's history, but always with a very small minority. A study of the great heroes of the faith, from Polycarp to Wykcliffe or from Campbell to Lipscomb, will turn up almost no tongue-speakers. But these men *did* have the Spirit and rejoiced in his indwelling.

Well, my case is stated. In closing I might acknowledge two references that would seem to militate against my thesis. Like old Walter Scott, I have placed the reception of the Holy Spirit immediately following baptism or at the time of baptism, but Cornelius and his household received the Spirit *before* baptism. I can admit this difficulty better than I can answer it. But my position is not so arbitrary that it cannot yield to this exceptional case. For some reason, perhaps to dramatize the entrance of the Gentiles into the faith, the Spirit was given to Cornelius perhaps even before he believed, and this was accompanied by tongues, which convinced the Jews present that God was no respecter of persons. But even here the experience was in connection with faith and obedience, Peter going on to insist that the Spirit-filled believers be baptized (Acts 10:47-48). This is certainly not a case of the Spirit coming along afterwards.

The other is the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8, who believed and were baptized, but who, indeed, received the Holy Spirit afterwards! The record reveals that Peter and John went to Samaria once they heard that the people had received the word of God, "who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

McGarvey in his *Commentary on Acts* gives an explanation that has been extensively accepted by our people, which is that the apostles' mission was to bestow an *extraordinary* measure of the Spirit, which only an apostle could bestow. McGarvey strongly contends that the Samaritans had received the common gift of the Spirit when they obeyed

the gospel, as Acts 2:38 promises, but that it took an apostle to give what he calls "the miraculous gift of the Spirit," for if Philip, who was not an apostle could have done so, he would have. So, according to this, the Samaritans had received the Spirit all right, but not the miraculous gift of the Spirit!

As much as I respect McGarvey, I must say that this is indeed risky. First, the claim that believers received the Holy Spirit (miraculous or otherwise) only by the laying on of an apostle's hand simply will not hold up. Cornelius received the Spirit apart from apostolic hands. The apostle Peter was there, but he not only did not have his hands extended in apostolic benediction, but he was surprised by what happened. Ananias was no apostle, but he laid hands on Saul, who received the Holy Spirit.

Second, McGarvey says the Samaritans did receive the Holy Spirit while Luke says they did not. Peter and John came "that they might receive the Holy Spirit." The doctor says plainly "It had not fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized." But McGarvey says they received the Spirit when they were baptized. They had to, he insists, for that was the promise to all who obeyed the gospel. So it had to be some extraordinary gift of the Spirit that the apostles bestowed. Unfortunately Luke makes no such distinction between ordinary or extraordinary. There is no implication here of any *miraculous* gift of the Spirit, whatever that may be made to mean. There is no mention of tongue-speaking or any kind of miraculous demonstration once the Spirit was given. Either they received the Spirit when they were baptized or they did not. The Bible says they did not.

My *opinion* is that there was something wrong in the conversion of the Samaritans. If they did not receive the Spirit when they turned to the Lord, then something must have been wrong with their turning. The context makes it clear that there was something wrong with Simon's conversion, who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. We certainly cannot conclude that the apostles had to scamper around all over the country laying their hands on folk so they could receive the Spirit. Since Pentecost new believers had been receiving the Spirit without the apostles around, such as the Eunuch in this same chapter. Then why did Peter and John go to Samaria? Because they were especially needed. Something had gone wrong. A good case is made for this view in A. A. Hoekema's *Holy Spirit Baptism*, if you wish to pursue it further.

A thesis does not fall because of an admitted difficulty. Whatever we say of the Samaritans, it is still generally the case that the Spirit did not come along afterwards, but when believers obeyed the gospel. If the case of the Samaritans leads folk to conclude that there was something amiss in their conversion and that they have all along been bereft of the Spirit and on that basis seek the Spirit's presence, I certainly would not discourage them. Yet I would not advise rebaptism, just as Peter and John did not rebaptize those Samaritans, even though they were void of the Spirit. Paul *did* rebaptize those in Acts 19 because they had not received the Spirit, but they had experienced John's baptism instead

of Jesus' baptism. Incidentally, Paul's question to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?," further strengthens my thesis that the Spirit is not some "second blessing" that comes afterwards. It is obvious that he expected people to receive the Holy Spirit upon becoming Christians. —*the Editor*

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THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

Dr. Claude E. Spencer of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society once told me that the *name* we are to wear is one of the most controversial issues in the history of discipledom, and he added that this is the one subject that has been badly neglected by researchists.

It is common knowledge to our historians that Campbell and Stone had their differences on this issue, Campbell preferring the name *Disciples*, while Stone insisted that *Christians* was the God-ordained name. This difference was not resolved in the great union that was effected in 1831, and so both terms were used widely. But the debate has continued. Not only in regard to the name or names the believer is to wear, but as to how a congregation or a group of congregations is to be designated. To this day it is confusing, for the heirs of the Restoration heritage are variously named Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ and often times a mixture of any two of these.

The Disciples of Christ were for a longtime officially so designated, but in recent years they have changed their name to Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), while the second group, commonly called *Independent* Christian Churches, barely tolerate the appendage and prefer simply Christian Churches, though they often use Churches of Christ. The latter group is the most exclusive of the three, using *Church of Christ* on virtually every sign, and as an adjective it is used in reference to preachers, colleges, journals, and we even hear of Church of Christ doctrine.

It may as well be conceded that these three groups, heirs of a Movement intended to unite the Christians in all the sects, are now three distinct denominations, however the names are passed around. One evidence of this is that only these particular names are ever used. None of our buildings or literature ever bears such a designation as Church of the Lord, Church of God, or even Christ's Church, as one denomination prefers to call itself. Being a denomination may not be all that bad, and it is important to distinguish that likelihood from being a sect. But it is folly for two of these groups (the Disciples excepted) to disclaim denominational status. It necessarily follows that if a group of people identify

themselves by a particular name, using it exclusively and so separating themselves from other believers (who may also be exclusively denominated), it is indeed a denomination.

To be non-denominational a group of believers would have to have only universal (catholic) characteristics, with nothing in their name, doctrine or practice that would in itself be peculiar to them, thus setting them apart from others.

While we appreciate the problem that Dr. Spencer called to our attention, and while we would welcome a serious study of our history on the name, this essay is intended only to be an approach to the question from a different angle. Suppose someone not of our Movement should argue that the exclusive name that he and his people wear is the proper name for the church, how would he fare?

I am impressed with a tract issued by Gulf-Coast Bible College entitled *Did God Forget to Name the Church?,*written by Everett I. Carver. Mr. Carver acknowledges that the church is variously designated the family, the vine, the body, and the bride, but these are based upon analogy and are not names. There is but the one name that God gave His church, the Church of God.

He goes on to comment upon some ten instances in which the scriptures speak of the Church of God. In Acts 20:28 it is the Church of God that the elders are to feed; it was the Church of God that Paul says he persecuted, according to Gal. 1:13 and 1 Cor. 15:9; in 1 Cor. 10:32 Paul urges the believers to cause no offense to the Church of God. In 1 Tim. 3:5 Paul talks of how the bishop is to take care of the Church of God and in 1 Cor. 11:22 he shames those who would despise the Church of God.

When congregations are referred to as a whole, or all believers included, the name is still Church of God in the plural, Mr. Carver observes., 1 Thess. 2:14 refers to the Churches of God in Christ Jesus and 1 Cor. 11:16 speaks of what the Churches of God practice and do not practice.

In both of his letters to Corinth the apostle addresses them as “the church of God which is at Corinth.” That such was indeed *the name* of the church at Corinth is strengthened by the non-canonical *Epistle of Clement,* who was a bishop in Rome, writing to the Corinthians. Says Clement: “The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth.”

All this should be persuasive to anyone who is searching the scriptures for a name for the church. Surely if anyone name is to be chosen, based on frequency of use in the scriptures, it would have to be the Church of God.

How about the three names our folk have adopted? Alexander Campbell preferred Disciple for the individual believer, for this is the usual term applied to him in scripture. But only by implication do we go from that to Disciples of Christ for the name of the church, and the church is never so designated in scripture. It cannot be proved that Christian was a God-given name rather than a nickname given by outsiders, and it is

noteworthy that no believer ever so designates himself or another believer, not even Luke, the church's first historian. Never did *he* call the disciples Christians. And to go from there to Christian Church is no less precarious, however appropriate the term appears.

How about Church of Christ? This name has been contended for on the ground that the church is the bride of Christ and so should wear his name. But that would call for the Church of *Jesus,* since the Bible makes it clear that "his name shall be called Jesus." He is called the Christ in that he was the anointed one of God, but that was not his name.

Even so the name does not appear anywhere in scripture. Rom. 16:16 refers to Churches of Christ in the plural, a fact that has to be overworked in making Church of Christ the name for the church. Mr. Carver is aware of Rom. 16:16 and comments as follows.

"This single usage is inadequate to offset the many texts where church of God and churches of God are used. In addition to this, the universal church is never called the church of Christ, no, not once."

I respectfully submit to you that Mr. Carver has made a good case for his contention. In the light of the scriptures it would be folly to argue either for Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, or Churches of Christ in preference to Churches of God. Should the leaders of all denominations assemble in an effort to agree upon one name only, one would suppose that they would be hard put to bypass the Church of God for any other designation.

To those of us who use Church of Christ not only exclusively but almost demandingly (It is after all *our* name!), Mr. Carver's thesis should be especially provocative. If we are going to say that the church has a name, one that we will use exclusively, we have a weak case in contending that that name is Church of Christ over against the array of scriptural testimony given by Mr. Carver.

Now Mr. Carver is not just saying that Church of God is more frequently used in scripture, but that *this* name is the name God gave his church. Here his case weakens, for it cannot be proved that the church has any *name* at all. One problem is in the term *church,* which is a poor translation of *ecclesia.* So Mr. Carver's first concession would have to be *Congregation* of God or *Community* of God instead of Church of God, which would foul up as many signboards and sermon outlines among his folk as among ours.

Too, if God had actually named His church, the evidence would be more abundant and that one name more pronounced in scripture. After all, the term *church* (granting the questionable translation) occurs 112 times in the New Covenant scriptures, usually simply as *the church,* which dwarfs the few times that Church of God occurs.

Mr. Carver's thoughtful tract is asking if God forgot to name the church. The answer to that could be that He did not *forget* to name it, but that He simply did not *choose* to name it. Why should He name it? Was His community on earth to be in competition with others of a similar nature that it would have to be distinguished by a name? Argue as he will, Mr.

Carver's knowledge of scripture will force the admission that God nowhere *names* the church anything. He has given the church numerous descriptive designations, depending upon the function or relationship, but never anyone name, If He did so name it, then He denominated it and it is a denomination.

Mr. Carver needs to realize, just as my folk do, that even a scriptural designation of the church can become a sectarian title — even when one has more "Brownie points" than the other fellow in terms of occurrences in scripture. A party name can be lifted from the Bible as well as outside the Bible. Paul was as much distressed over the party of Christ (or *God* if you like) at Corinth as he was the parties of Cephas or Paul.

If we erect meetinghouses, they might well be named whatever we choose, whether Truett Memorial Church, Park Street Meetinghouse, or Brooks Chapel, but the Body of Christ should be given no name and its members should have no party labels. The church, whether in a catholic or local sense, should be referred to as God's assembly, the community of Christ, the fellowship of saints, the congregation of the first-born — or, if we must use the word *church*, then the Church of God, the Church of Christ, etc. But never one name to the exclusion of others.

More important is what we *think* when we identify the church. If in using *Church of Christ* I have in mind *less* than all those who are in Christ, then I am fostering sectarianism. So with *Church of God* or any other scriptural description. You can have a "Church of God" sect as well as any other sect.

But still more important is that we *be* the church, however we identify ourselves. If people call themselves Lutherans, they are obviously wearing a human name, but if they behave as the Body of Christ is this not better than wearing a scriptural name and living unexemplary lives?

In Eph. 1:23 the apostle not only sees Jesus as head of the church, which is his body, but identifies the church as "the fullness of him who fills all in all." The church then is to be filled with Jesus, and it is to be his likeness in this world, When this is realized, there will be no problem in naming the church. Even the world will see us for what we are and will identify us accordingly, as disciples of the Prince of Peace. —*the Editor*

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NOTES ON OPTING OUT

Ron Durham

Since I'm opting out of regular pulpit work, the genial editor of this journal asked if I would write something regarding "the plight of the present-day minister of the pulpit and the problems he faces as a part of the system."

All right — as long as we all understand "the system" and its shortcomings are only partly involved. There is also a kind of metaphysical itch, in my case — a vague questioning of my place under the sun which changing jobs doesn't cure, but which inhibits performance at tasks that require a high degree of self-identity and self-assurance.

But even that sort of confession brings "the system" up for some criticism. Why should not the system allow "the preacher" to scratch (metaphysically) in public? We require the preaching minister to be the model of self-confidence and outgoingness. Perhaps this is because (I) we want him to attract more and better members, thus making him almost exclusively responsible for what is loosely called "church growth"; and (2) so many members lack self-assurance, especially in their faith, and they require at least one sample among them who shows them it's possible.

Now, I'm in favor of church growth. And I carry no brief for agnostic preachers sharing their un-faith from the pulpit. My primary interest just happens not to be "church growth" as such, *but working out and communicating a biblical theology for our time.* And I discovered that (1) sometimes this leaves me with questions, not the pure "evangel" which needs to burn in the heart of a true evangelist; and (2) most of us are not very interested in theology.

Most of "our folk" want simple biblicism, believing that this avoids theology. This group is impatient with a preacher's attempt to relate the Bible to culture; to listen to nonChristian objections to faith; to raise questions against our own smugness; to ask what social and physical ministries grow out of the gospel; and to be self-critical of "our position."

On the other hand, an intelligent minority among us is burned out on biblicism. These folk are true children of our modern, secular times. They are attracted to psychology and sociololy, rather than to theology. They wish to speak of healing interpersonal relationships, but not of "salvation." They want to do good to others, but they are not sure that this has anything to do with proclaiming Jesus as Lord.

While I, too, appreciate the Bible, I do not believe we can be biblical in the truest sense of the word without relentlessly asking what the Bible means *today;* that is, without doing theology. While I want to learn from such fields as psychology and sociology, I do not believe they are the same as theology; and my bag, as I said, is the latter.

Hence, what I do just doesn't sell well. And selling is where church growth is "at" in our society, as I am frequently reminded. But as we all know, successful salesmen concentrate on closing deals, not on raising questions. And given our plea for unity, vs. our actual divided state; given the distance between the 1st century and the 20th; given the problem of evil vs. a God of love … but there I You see, I have ceased to simply proclaim the gospel and have begun to theologize.

Hence, I am glad to relinquish my pulpit to another — and I do it without secretly feeling that he is not really facing the problems if he can still preach! But I do it also with the realization that what *I* do best can help myself and others come to grips with the world in the light of the gospel. My own interest can also be a ministry. For in my Father's house, much more than in "the system," there are many vocational mansions. And it is *His* system, His rule, in which we all must serve.

Ron Durham has been minister to Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston and will presently be on the editorial staff of Sweet Publishing Co., Box 4055, Austin, Tx. 78751

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The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians. — Thomas Campbell in *The Declaration and Address*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

I join brethren everywhere in expressing sorrow over the passing of J. W. Roberts of ACC. J. D. Thomas and Reuel Lemmons assisted in the funeral at the College Church of Christ in Abilene, April 17. J. W. and I graduated from ACC in the same class, and back in those days we were in hot competition for speech awards and student pulpits. We have kept in touch through the years as fellow editors and professors as well as friends. Among the last letters he received was one from me, commending him for what must have been the last of many articles in the *Firm Foundation.* And already I had marked that article for attention in this column, so reflective it is of our changing world.

Under the rather daring title of *How Many Articles in Your Creed, Brother?,* Prof. Roberts reviewed the struggle of our pioneers against creedalism, pointing to the incident of Isaac Errett drawing up a synopsis of faith "for the information of the public," but not intended as a creed. Benjamin Franklin and Moses Lard in their papers reproved Errett for scandalizing the Movement and called upon the brotherhood to repudiate it.

J. W. believed that we should continue to be free from creedalism, but he was lamenting some recent developments. He spoke of a proposal for "a doctrinal test" for teachers in Christian colleges that he resented, not that he would not personally pass it, but

because he did not believe in creeds. He also told of a congregation in Tennessee that has devised a doctrinal test for its teachers, covering such items as verbal inspiration, evolution, work of the Spirit, miracles, tongue-speaking, essentiality of membership in the Lord's church, possibility of salvation in denominationalism, essentiality of water baptism, instrumental music, and even necessity of attending all services.

Our deceased brother said that such creedalism is insulting as well as sectarian, and he pointed out that even Paul would not be able to teach in said' congregation since he believed in the personal indwelling of the Spirit, which the creed disallowed. J. W. further insisted that the number of services one attends must be left to one's own freedom in Christ. But his most serious objection was that the creed calls for "the elders to control the thinking of the individual by binding him to reveal to the elders any change in his thinking."

This kind of creedalism has long been with us, albeit few have dared to make it a *written* creed. And you will notice that a creed sets forth the *distinctive* features of a sect, not those that belong to the universal church. J. W. mentioned this too, observing that the Tennessee creed said nothing of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith or Christian ethics.

It is encouraging to find such wholesome teaching as this in such an influential journal as the *Firm Foundation* and from such an important place as Abilene Christian College. I deeply regret that the author will no longer be around to write more of them.

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The Eighth Annual Unity Forum will be in Tulsa, July 5-7, and it promises to be an exciting affair, with an excellent program and a rare slate of participants. Subjects will include the nature of brotherhood, the meaning of our disciple heritage, the ministry of women, a critique on some of our slogans, and an extended study of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. The first two subjects will be treated by Carl Ketcherside, editor of *Mission Messenger,* and Perry Gresham, chairman of the board, Bethany College. Three women — yes, I said *women* — will discuss the woman's ministry in the Body. These are Gloria Bradshaw of Tulsa, Ruth Ash of Dallas, and Cleona Harvey of Bloomington, Indiana, who touch three different age groups as well as that many backgrounds. This will be something of a first among us, having women discuss the work of women. But anything can happen at Tulsa and it usually does!

Thomas Langford of Lubbock, Stan Paregian of Stroud, Ok., and Waymon Miller of Tulsa will discuss the slogans, with an evaluation by Vic Hunter, editor of *Mission.* Warren Lewis of West Islip, N. Y. and Marvin Phillips of Tulsa will lead a study on the Spirit, which will go through two sessions (some five hours in all, with an evaluation by Carl Ketcherside. There will also be sharing sessions each day led by Leroy Garrett. All sessions will be on campus of University of Tulsa. Larry Bradshaw, 10841 E. 34th St.,

Tulsa 74145, will help you with housing arrangements or other information. Call him at 918-622-8119.

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Writing in a recent issue of *Theology Today* (Princeton), Richard I. Coleman says that one of the paradoxes of our times is that we are being forced to choose between Christian union and Christian truth. He sees COCU as a symptom of that choice, for it has given priority to some kind of organic unity while being intolerant of strict definitions of truth. He thinks COCU calls for a premature unity in that it is seeking to bring into union people who have not yet learned to accept each other as brothers. Coleman says that fellowship must have priority over forms and doctrines, and once we accept each other in love, we can move toward maturer levels of organizational oneness. But the scandal of Christendom is not denominations, but that believers seek status in doctrine and form rather than in love. If COCU dies, Coleman believes the cause to be a lack of theological guts. We can "talk out" and "pray out" our differences, perhaps, but only if we can start with a minimal "core faith" in the uniqueness of Jesus. Ecumenical efforts tend to renounce the necessity of the Christian faith in favor of a syncretistic religion, he points out.

It is interesting that this same question of unity and truth is a basic problem in our own efforts. We must identify the "core faith" that forms the basis of brotherhood. Across the country and in this journal I have identified the core as the seven ones of Eph. 4, which ought to be a safe place to stand since it is there that the apostle pleads for "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But if the basis is made to include everything from societies and organs to classes and millennial theories unity is impossible. If COCU fails for lack of strictness, we will fail for too much strictness.

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Sincerity is the indispensable ground of all conscientiousness, and by consequence of all heartfelt religion. — *Immanuel Kant*

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Thank you very much for that very exciting issue on Barton Stone. Thank God for you and other people who lift a strong voice now and again to those sturdy pioneers. We are the inheritors of something noble and good. —*Perry Gresham, Bethany College, Bethany, W. V. 26032.*

I was baptized 50 years ago and have been associated with the Restoration Movement since 1923. I served the instrumental congregations, but I have recently found something that has drawn me toward my brethren in the noninstrumental congregations, especially one group here in my own city. —*J. B. Welsh, 826 Central Ave., Kansas City 66101.*

(One mark of a united church is that our brethren will be able to move from one group to another without it being a big deal. We are sectarians so long as we hail such a move as a "conversion." Because of justifiable differences we will have congregations that are unlike on the millennium, methodology, or instrumental music, but there must still be free exchange and communication between them. —*Ed*.)

Concerning your point about miracles being observed (your article on spiritual gifts), it would depend on the spiritual nature of the observer. Paul tells us that spiritual things can neither be known nor discerned by the natural man (1 Cor. 2:1 4). Perhaps we would all observe more if our spiritual eyes were opened as in the case of the young man in Elisha's camp at Dothan. The angels and the chariots of fire were there all the time, but the young man couldn't see them until his eyes were opened. —*Lee Keesling, 4728 S. 29th St., Arlington, Va. 22206.*

(While Lee's point is well made, the idea I was suggesting, drawn in part from a definition of miracle by Bultmann, was that for an event to be a miracle it had to be observable by those around, to witness to them that .the phenomenon cannot be explained *naturally.* So it would be a demonstration to the unbelievers as well as believers. One would not have to have special insight to see that water was transformed into wine or that a dead Lazarus was made to come alive after being dead several days. The point is that however disinclined one would be toward the supernatural, he would have to admit that something beyond human power had taken place. If Bultmann is right that a miracle is always *observable,* then all those things that God must do abundantly, such as dispatching angels to rescue us from an impending danger (which no one sees and even we ourselves are unaware of), would not be miracles. Bultmann uses *providence* for the things that may well be supernatural, but not wonders (that is, seen by men). The larger point has to do with whether miracles have ceased. One so arguing needs to be careful how he defines his terms. —*Ed*.)

We are ourselves beginning a new ministry, as I will begin my advanced training in surgery in Rochester, N. Y. Although we finally feel led of the Lord to seek elsewhere than the Church of Christ for continuing growth and fellowship, we do not want to lose touch with our great heritage and our beautiful brothers and sisters who in Jesus and in the Church of Christ. We still pray with Jesus "that they (we) may be one." —*Mike and Nina Gehl, 253A Elmwood Terrace, Rochester, N. Y. 14620.*

(I would that all who leave us (or take a sabbatical!) could do so with such love. More of us are beginning to realize that one does not necessarily leave Jesus when he leaves the Church of Christ. And rather than it being a lack of spiritually that prompts it, it may well be a greater commitment that causes it. While I understand, it still grieves me for such ones to leave, for they are among the very ones we need so badly. Why don't we also show that we can love like this by writing to Mike and Nina and sharing with them in the Lord. —*Ed.*)

I would like to thank you for introducing me to the American Bible Society. I've enjoyed helping send the Bible around the world to those who do not have it in their own language. Also for information that is allowing us to enjoy helping the LeDoux family in Vietnam. It gives me more pleasure than building church houses and many other things we see "the Lord's money" spent for these days. —*Marguerite Mouser, Box 104, Rt. 4, Tullahoma, Tn. 37388.*

We thank God for your publication and for your willingness to accept as brothers in Christ those with whom you disagree. How wonderfully our God works through the personalities of those who are open to His Spirit, and who truly are convinced that Jesus is both our Savior and Lord. May he bless your efforts toward unity and spiritual concern for all who are willing to let go of self and let God guide us in any way He sees fit regardless of the molds into which our brothers have confined us. What a joy to read publications that are open, informative, and challenging. The Lord is our strength and joy! —*Helen Berg, 2401 Green Ave., Port Arthur, TX 77640.*

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